

REMARKS

The Office Action dated December 28, 2005 has been received and carefully noted. The above amendments to the claims and the following remarks are submitted as a full and complete response thereto.

Claims 1-3, 6-13, 21-23, and 26-33 were allowed. Claims 19, 20, 39, and 40 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected based claim, but would otherwise be allowable.

In accordance with the foregoing, claims 14, 20, 34, and 40 have been amended. No new matter is being presented, and approval and entry are respectfully requested. Claims 19 and 39 have been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer. As will be discussed below, it is also requested that all of the pending claims be found allowable as reciting patentable subject matter.

Claims 1-3, 6-17, 20-23, 26-27, and 40 are pending and under consideration.

In the Office Action, at page 2, claims 14-16 and 34-36 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102 as being anticipated by U. S. Patent No. 5,331,637 to Francis et al. ("Francis"). Also, in the Office Action, at page 3, claims 17 and 37 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being unpatentable over Francis in view of U. S. Patent No. 6,778,532 to Akahane et al. ("Akahane").

Claims 19, 20, 39, and 40 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. Independent claim 14 has been amended to incorporate the recitations of claim 19. Claim 20 has been

amended to incorporate the recitations of original independent claim 14, thereby making claim 20 an independent claim. Claim 34 has been amended to incorporate the recitations of claim 39. Finally, claim 40 has been amended to incorporate the recitations of original independent claim 34, thereby making claim 40 an independent claim. Claims 19 and 39 have been cancelled, without prejudice or disclaimer.

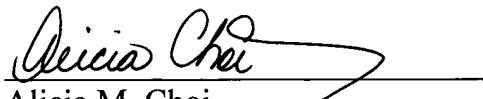
Accordingly, because independent claims 14, 20, 34, and 40 include subject matter recognized by the Office Action as allowed subject matter, it is respectfully asserted that the rejections to independent claims 14, 20, 34, and 40 and related dependent claims in view of the prior art of record are moot. It is respectfully requested that independent claims 14, 20, 34, and 40 and related dependent claims be allowed.

Also, dependent claims 17 and 37 depend from independent claims 14 and 34, respectively, thereby inheriting all of the patentable subject matter thereof. Therefore, it is respectfully asserted that the rejections to dependent claims 17 and 37 in view of the prior art of record are moot. It is respectfully requested that dependent claims 17 and 37 be allowed.

If for any reason the Examiner determines that the application is not now in condition for allowance, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner contact, by telephone, the applicants' undersigned attorney at the indicated telephone number to arrange for an interview to expedite the disposition of this application.

In the event this paper is not being timely filed, the applicants respectfully petition for an appropriate extension of time. Any fees for such an extension together with any additional fees may be charged to Counsel's Deposit Account 50-2222.

Respectfully submitted,


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Enclosures: Petition for Extension of Time
Additional Claim Fee Transmittal
Check No. 14337